

THE OTTOMAN MILITARY BAND "MEHTER"

Regarding its first roots, Turkish music culture has been one of the oldest, the deepest, the most efficient and the most spread constituent of the World music culture with its existence and evolution, which started in the prehistoric times, and continued during all History Ages, and so, solidly managed to reach our time (Ali Uçan, <http://www.beethovenlives.net/index.asp?ID=431> s.1).

From the documents related to Turkish military history, it is learned that music has been used by Turks in training of the army and in wars since the first periods of the civilization, starting from 4th century B.C. Moreover, it is recorded by the historians of that age, that in the 2nd century B.C., while Turks were living in the important areas like Kucha and Balassagun, a Chinese General who went there on duty had a music group established in the Chinese palace when he went back with the instruments he had taken from Turks. (Say, 1958: 807).

Turkish music culture accumulation, which has been formed starting from Altai period passing through the Turkish states in Middle Asia and Middle-West Asia, has interacted with all music cultures of Anatolia in 11th century, the Balkans in 14th century, and later with Middle and gradually West Europe. Additionally, it has been in relation and interaction with North African, East European, and South-West Asian music cultures. Turkish music culture has passed through development stages that depend on each other, however, that show different features during times of Seljuk, Ottoman, and Turkish Republic, which were founded after one another in the place of the other, that are assumed as the continuance of one another, and thus, took over the accumulation of the previous one (Ali Uçan, <http://www.beethovenlives.net/index.asp?ID=431> s. 4).

After 1071, with the Seljuks who gained power in most of the parts of Anatolia, culture mosaic of thousands of years has been strengthened. Seljuks managed to create an elaborated synthesis from the historical-cultural accumulation of Asia and Middle-east. Especially, the Anatolia of 13th century, presents a distinctive humanistic progress in philosophy and literature, in music and dance, in architecture and decoration arts by the help of acceleration brought in by Turks.

One of the most salient additions comprising conduction of Asia's culture constituents into Anatolia is enacting the deep-seated military music

tradition, which was formed of Asian instruments and was formerly called "tuğ takımı", under the name of "Tabilhane". Tuğ takımı and Tabilhane were the names given to the band. During Seljuks whose dresses symbolized the seven colours of the sun, it was defined by the famous Turkish musicologist Gazimihal that Tabilhane was formed of the instruments named YIRAĞ (=Surnay, later in us 'zurna, that is the wind instrument like shepherd's pipe); BORGUY, BUR, or BUĞ (= Boru, 'nefir' in Arabic, that is another wind instrument similar to trumpet); KÜVRÜK (=Kûs, in time 'kös' in us, it is an percussion instrument similar to timpani); TÛMRÛK (= Tabl, Dühül, in us Davul- That it is called Drum); ÇENG (= Zil, Gong; 'Çang' It is called Cymbal)) (Gazimihal, 1957: 25).

The actual instrument groups in Tabilhane, which impressed the audience with its high pitch and volume, since nine was the lucky number in Turks were formed of nine persons from each instrument. And, it is not hard to guess the admiration for the powerful sound of this by the person around who there were no noises of factory, vehicles, etc. The interest in Tabilhane is seen natural for the person who is accustomed to the instruments especially used for worship, are used in Tabilhane, too. Although it does not reach the impressive sound of a thunder, with the tone and volume that it characterizes, Tabilhane tradition reaches close effect, and is accepted that it was passed from Kara Hans to Anatolian Seljuks, from Ilhans to Mamelukes, and then reached Ottomans (Antep, <http://www.musikidergisi.net/?p=54>).

Tabilhanes, which were institutionalized by Seljuks, were the first schools that trained professional musicians in Anatolia, and by improving in the following centuries took the name "MEHTERHANE" during Ottoman period (<http://www.kultur.gov.tr/TR/BelgeGoster.aspx?F6E10F8892433CFF7E7F2B691D9F0097272E3DAA9474FE>).

In 1289, among the presents sent by Seljuk's Sultan, Giyaseddin Mesut 2nd to the Sultan of Ottoman Osman Bey there were davul which is drum in English, Zil which is cymbal in English, and nakkare that is like Bongo which are seen as the strongest evidence of that Tabilhane formed the base of Mehterhane. This event is accepted as the first foundation of Mehterhane. The difference between Mehter and the former bands like Tuğ takımı and tabilhane is from the melodies played and other difference is that in Mehter, songs with words gained importance, additionally, apart of the ones in battle area, performing was done also by Esnaf Mehterleri. (Antep, <http://www.musikidergisi.net/?p=54>). Esnaf mehterleri was the mehters that wasn't work for the government. They were gaining money by performing.

Mehterhanes, which are known as "Ottoman Military Music" within the country, and "Soldier and War Music of Anatolian Turks" out of the country

completed their development and matured especially during imperial period, becoming an important institution where thousands of musicians were trained and their performance skills were highly improved under military discipline, and as the only music centre affiliated with the state pioneered and guided European bands for a long time (<http://www.hvkk.tsk.mil.tr/PageSub/Calismalarimiz/HvKvBandosu/HvKvBandosu.asp>)

It is known that Mehter always played where the Padishah was, if the Padishah campaigned, in front of the tent, if not, in their place in the palace (formerly five times a day before each prayer), three sections after mid-afternoon prayer and the last prayer, and they prayed for the health of the Padishah, and again towards the morning they used to do performing in order to wake the divan folk for the prayer, additionally, during some certain times they played in the castles out of the state centre. During the end of 17th, and 18th century it is mentioned in the written resources that Mehterhanes, in which totally approximately 1000 musicians worked, used to play at the same hours in various places of Istanbul (Topkapı Palace, Yedikule, Eyyub, Kasımpaşa, Galata, Tophane, Beşiktaş, Anatolian Citadel, Uskudar ve The Maiden's Tower). Beside padishahs, it is known that grand viziers, sea captains, viziers, governors also had Mehters. It is known that mehters were used especially in battle times to inflame soldiers and corrupt enemy's mood. Also they were used to announce victories. Additionally, it was stated that they performed also in wedding and circumcision feasts of the princes, and in this kind of amusements.

In the Mehterhane of the Sultan there were nine or twelve from each instrument and in others, seven or nine depending on the level of the place played. If the Sultan campaigned, mehter was made double in number, which is, twenty four from each instrument were used in performing. Kös which is like timpani existed only in Sultan's mehters until the period of Selim 3rd, they weren't present in mehters of lower rulers. It is known that in some battles, mehter took place with 300-500 köses. And, it is narrated that during the conquest of Istanbul, there were 270 zurnas (Turkish wind instrument like shepherd's pipe), 150 boru (wind instrument like trumpet), 300 drums, and numerous köses (like timpani) were played (http://www.mehtertv.com/viewpage.php?page_id=3).

It is written that during war time, the volume of mehter was increased when the enemy was close and drum players used to shout "Yektir Allah yek - One is God one". All functions of mehters were determined by laws.

While mehter was listened on foot as an indication of courtesy to the Sultan of Seljuk's, Fatih Sultan Mehmet said that it was not necessary to

stand for a sultan who had died two hundred years ago, and abolished the tradition of standing up.

The person who administrated the mehter of the Sultan, and who was the chief of all mehterhanes in Istanbul, and who had all skills and knowledge necessary to train the musicians was called "mehterbaşı" which means head of mehter. He walks in front of the Band (In Ottomans head of the mehter was the head of zurna players that in Turkish he is called zurnazenbaşı) In today's application, with his sceptre, the head of the mehter is in position of the conductor of the band. Besides the head of Mehter, also, the ones who played the same instrument had a leader as well.

While in Seljuks, Tabilhanes members wore dresses symbolizing the seven colours of the sun, during Fatih Sultan Mehmet period the clothes of Mehter members changed and a uniform of mostly red, which represented Turks, and green that represented Islam were foreseen. It is known that the most interesting clothe was worn in time of Kanuni Sultan Süleyman which was in form of "sable coat" (Antep, <http://www.musikidergisi.net/?p=54>). While concertmasters of each instruments used to wear red frocks, red quilted turban, red baggy trousers, yellow three skirts and yellow kerchief, the others wore dark blue frocks, quilted turban, baggy trousers, colourful three skirts and red kerchief (<http://www.itmt.org/mehter.htm>) Mehter uniform changed during other sultans as well.

The instruments of Mehter and the players of each instrument were called as in the following:

Sertabbal (davulzen): This is the name of the drum performer within Mehter. Head of the drummers is also the assistant of the head of Mehter.

The birth of the drum that is the main instrument used by Turks for a very long time is Middle-Asia. The drum was brought to Anatolia by Seljuk Turks, and was spread in Europe by Ottoman Turks.

Drum is formed of a rim and of a skin stretched out on both sides of it. The rim can be made of walnut, pine, fir, lime tree, and poplar. Its diameter may change between 50 and 90 cm, depending on the size. On both sides of the rim, with the help of a ring or a strap, goat or cow skin is stretched. The strap is also used for tuning the drum by stretching or loosening it. A drum is played with a mallet which is called in Turkish "tokmak" and a baton which is also called in Turkish "Çıbık" or "zipzipi". The mallet is made of the roots of savage pear tree or savage rose tree, and its beats determine the strong beats of the melody. The baton, on the other hand, is a thin stick that is made of the branches of cranberry or juniper trees. The lively and quick beats of the baton during the weak beats of the melodies is called clipping, during assisting "uzun hava" beating it with vibrations is called "dem tutma"

(www.mehter.com/home.php?link=mars&dil=tr). We can say that "dem tutma" is "ostinato". "Uzun Hava" is the Turkish Folk Song without beat.

Ser nefiri (boruzen): This is the name of the Boru performer within Mehter. Boru's looking like today's trumpets first were made of barks, and later made by bending copper and brass plates. It has been used in all orchestras, music groups, harmonica teams of the world, and is still used.

Serzurnazen (zurnazen): This is the name of the Zurna player within Mehter. Zurna is the oldest folk wind instrument of Turks. It is formed of two parts that are the stem and the reed which is called sipşi in Turkish. The stem, which is made of plum tree, is also completed with a head part that is made of boxwood. Zurnas used in Anatolia vary between 25 and 60 cm. There are 7 fret holes in front and 1 in the back. Also, on the wide side of the zurna there are holes that are called devil holes, and these are blocked with wax or cleared of it, and that way the tuning of the sounds is arranged. The reed is a sedge part that helps to make sound. It is attached to the head by attaching it to a small thin metal pipe of 5-6 cm together with a round part called mouth piece. Although the sound width of the Zurna is one octave, master musicians can increase this width (www.mehter.com/home.php?link=mars&dil=tr).

Çevgani: These are the performers who sing the marches and pieces, and carry çevgen, that is the instrument which is in form of a stick that has a brass or yellow crescent in the end of it, and around which there are small cymbals attached to it made of brass or silver. This musical instrument, which is assumed to have been added to Mehter in the end of 18th century, is peculiar to only Mehter. It is not used anywhere else. Çevgani performers also used to wear clothes like all concertmasters responsible from each kind of instrument.

Nakkarezen (Sernakkazeren): Within Mehter, this is the name of the performer who plays nakkare. Nakkare is another percussion instrument similar to bongo. The mouth of nakkare which is covered with leather and is formed of two different sizes crocks connected to each other. The stem can be made of clay, and metal (copper), walnut or mulberry as well. The height of the stem is approximately 30 cm. The diameter of the small stem is between 11 and 14 cm, and the big ones is between 24 and 28 cm. In the surface of the stem, is stretched goat skin. Nakkare is played with sticks of 35 cm. Since the stems are of different sizes, the sound of the smaller one is sharper and higher (www.mehter.com/home.php?link=mars&dil=tr).

Köszen : This is the name of the performer within Mehter who plays the Kös that is an instrument similar to today's timpani. Kös, which is a big

drum, is carried on camels or horses, and the animals that carry them become deaf in time and they used to be retired.

Zilzen, (serzinciviri, zilci başı): This is the name of the zil players within Mehter. Zil is cymbal in English. Zil that was used in Mehter for centuries is used in all military and civil bands and orchestras today.

In front of Mehter stands "Çorbacıbaşı" who is Company's Commander, behind him is the Red Flag representing the state, White one representing the victory, the Green Flag representing Islam, and guardsmen to protect these flags for they were assumed holy. Since the former Turkish Khans assumed 9 as lucky number, after the flags came 9 "Tuğ" in three rows, the biggest of which was the attack tuğ. Tuğ is the symbol of 2,5m, on the top of which there is a knob made of brass, from two sides of which hang horse tails. It has been used in Turkish states as the symbol of sultanate since the oldest ages, also used as the sign of duty and tenancy like sultan, vizier, governor, flag officer. After "Tuğs" came Head of Mehter (Mehterbaşı), Çevgens, Zurnazens, Boruzens, Nakkarezens, Zilzens, Davulzens, and Köszen on the most back on horse come.

The march of Mehter, unlike the formation of today's modern army march, starts with the right foot, and in every three steps the folk on the right and on the left is saluted by stopping. When Mehter is to take concert formation, the easy walk starts with left foot; and mehter takes half circle (crescent) formation (in the first years of its foundation while mehter formed circle formation, in the later years it started to line up in half circle (crescent)); and until the formation is completed a "peşrev" in other words prelude (stringed instrument work) is played. Kös takes its place in the middle of the crescent. Kös represents the star in the Turkish flag, and the other musicians that form the half circle represent the crescent in the Turkish flag. After the concert is finished in the lead of Mehterbaşı (Head of Mehter) who stands right in the middle of the crescent, a mehter prayer, which is called Gülbak, is performed and the concert area is left by playing a prelude (<http://mrvmrt.blogcu.com/4078079/>).

Most of the songs of Mehter have been composed by the musicians employed in Mehterhane. The oldest mehter melodies that have reached our time are the works of the 16th century. And, most of the works that have musical notes are the pieces of 17th century. Although the emphasis in Mehter music is on instruments, various works with words have also been composed. Mehter music has played an important role in the formation of the repertoire and style of instrumental works of Classical Turkish music. The known mehter pieces are formed of various rhythm clusters that are called "usul" in Turkish and 24 modes that are also used in Turkish Music.

Turkish fashion in 17th and 18th centuries has expanded so much that “Turquire”, the name given to copper handiwork of Turkish motives, took its place in French houses, and the lifestyle, customs and traditions of Turkish society has been the topic of numerous novels, theatres and operas (Çinuçen Tánríkorur, <http://www.koprudergisi.com/index.asp?Bolum=EskiSayilar&Goster=Yazi&YaziNo=443>). With the advancement of Ottomans to the middle of Europe, the irregular meters and the sound colours of the Turkish traditional instruments, along with many items in mehter music, especially percussion instruments and cymbals took the attention of Western composers, and that way they have entered European music altogether. In the works of some European composers like Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Lully there are parts that were inspired from mehter music.

For instance, the final of the 3rd part of W.A.Mozart’s piano sonata (KV 331-300i), which he called “Alla Turca”, is a brilliant Janissary music, where in the end one feels like he/she hears trumpets, piccolo flutes, Turkish drums and cymbals (Aktüze, 2003: 1445). Again, in the 3rd part of Violin Concerto in A Nr: 5 (KV 219) in the allegro part of Rondo it is observed that it was maybe written considering the day’s trends by being affected by janissary music in form of Turkish-Hungarian melodies that might have reached Salzburg from Hungary (Aktüze, 2003: 1524). Moreover, it can be seen that Mozart’s opera “Die Entführung aus dem Serail (KV 384)” was composed approximately during the same dates (Özalp, 2000: 42), and besides its topic, it was affected by Mehter music since in the prelude of four minutes Turkish type percussion instruments like timpani, cymbals, and big drum were used (Aktüze, 2003: 1596).

The 4th part of Op. 113 Athens’ Derelicts, Marcia alla Turca (vivace), the theme of which Beethoven took from Op. 76 D Major Variations that he had composed in 1809, and his work named Marcia Alla Turca, which he published for four hands piano in 1822, that was as popular as Mozart’s ‘Alla Turca’, was in Turkish March style (İrkin Aktüze, Müziği Okumak, Cilt 1, 2003, Pan yayıncılık, s. 296); and again, the 4th part of 9th symphony Op. 125 of D Minor that was formed of orchestra variations of alla Marcia tempo (Aktüze, 2003: 310), again the G Major Nr. 100 Symphony (Military) of Haydn who has darkly reflected the ceremonial music of Janissary in minor tone by using big drum, cymbal, and triangle (Aktüze, 2003: 1061); Lully’s work “Marche pour la Ceremonie des Turcs” (March for Turkish Ceremony) that reflected Ottoman ceremony (Aktüze, 2003: 1292) can be

accounted of examples that Turks and mehter music has affected European music.

Also, in 13th century Mehter Organization was founded in Austria, and was applied in theatre by the famous composer Gluck, and again, Turkish cymbals were used by the same composer in his opera named "Iphigene en Tauride" (Özalp, 2000: 42).

It is learned from the written resources that Ottoman Empire had sent one team of Mehter for each Austria, and Poland as a gift, and in order to improve the military band that was founded in the time of Elizabet Petrofna, the daughter of Katerina 1st in Russia, and to investigate Turkish Military Music specialists were sent to Istanbul (Özalp, 2000: 42).

Mehterhane, which is a part of Janissary Centre, was abolished by Mahmut 2nd in 1826 after the foundation of the new army and the foundation of "Muzika-i Hümayun" that was the band in western style. Mehterhane was reorganized in 1914, and in order to replace old boru and to be used together with zurnas, western wind instruments like trumpet, clarinet, and trombone have joined Mehter, too (Anabritannica, 1986: 507). With the foundation of the Republic, Mehterhane was abolished once again, and it started to work under the organization of Istanbul Military Music in 1952, and managed to catch attention especially in tours abroad (Aktüze, 2003: 343). In addition to Mehter, which is under the command of General Staff Chieftain, there are more than 50 Mehter communities founded by municipalities, associations, schools, and political parties that carry on show intended performances. One of these is placed in Bursa that is the city where our university stands, trying to continue their functions as closely as possible to the original way in BURHOY Bursa Mehter Music and Folk Dances Association, and Inegöl Municipality Mehter team.

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